



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 9, 2023

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT, FIRST LADY AMY ESHLEMAN, AND DEPARTMENT OF
FAMILY AND SUPPORT SERVICES ANNOUNCE \$15.9M INVESTMENT FOR
COMMUNITY SAFE SPACES AND RESOURCES FOR YOUTH**

A part of the My CHI. My Future. initiative expansion, the City will support community organizations connecting Chicago's youth in 15 communities across the South and West sides through youth employment, engaging events, and community convenings for strategic planning

Today, Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot, First Lady Amy Eshleman, and the Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) announced the awarded delegate organizations for the My CHI. My Future (MCMF) Year-Round Safe Spaces for Youth and Community Anchor Organizations programs.

The MCMF initiative started in 2019 with the goal of connecting youth to a variety of rich, engaging, safe, and youth centered out-of-school time opportunities across the city. Since then, MCMF has launched several city-wide and community-based strategies. The Safe Spaces for Youth and Community Anchor Organizations programs represent an expansion of the MCMF community-based strategy to 15 target Community Strategy Regions across the South and West sides. These programs are supported through American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding to address the COVID-19 pandemic-related effects on young people and communities across the City's most impacted regions.

"First Lady Amy Eshleman and I are proud to continue ensuring that Chicago's young people have access to enriching opportunities while simultaneously addressing the lack of safe, productive spaces for youth," said Mayor Lightfoot. "Through the expansion of the My CHI. My Future. community strategy work in partnership with the Department of Family and Support Services, our youth and communities will have access to year-round employment opportunities, spaces where our young residents can safely gather, and opportunities for convening youth-serving organizations in 15 regions across the South and West sides."

"The Department of Family and Support Services is excited to be carrying forward the My CHI. My Future. initiative championed by Mayor Lightfoot and First Lady Amy



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



Eshleman throughout their tenure,” said DFSS Commissioner Brandie Knazze. “The Safe Spaces program provides critical opportunities for youth to design and host events in their communities for their peers while earning — while the Community Anchor Organizations will lead critical conversations for designing community-driven plans.”

The Safe Spaces for Youth program builds on the success of the MCMF Summer and Winter Kickback Series, which ran from 2020 to 2022. The Safe Spaces for Youth program includes both community events — called “Kickbacks” — and year-round youth employment. Kickback events will strengthen healthy community ecosystems for young people (ages 13 to 19) and their families across the city through enriching, community-based out-of-school time activities. The youth employment component will provide youth (ages 16 to 24) an opportunity to gain work experience and increase self-efficacy while planning and implementing community events throughout the year.

Each My CHI. My Future. Safe Spaces for Youth awarded program will host 11 events during key out-of-school periods and provide 15 youth with 360 hours of employment annually. Each of the awarded programs will receive equal funding of \$173,391 per year to carry out this work. Four of the awarded agencies will serve two regions each.

“We are excited to continue our collaboration with MCMF through implementing the Safe Spaces for Youth Program in 2023,” shares Natasha Smith-Walker, Executive Director of Safe Spaces for Youth agency Project Exploration. “This opportunity helps support our programming with young people in Austin as they work to plan safe and engaging events for themselves and their peers in their home community.”

The community-based organizations that were funded for the Year-Round Safe Spaces for Youth program, and the Community Strategy Regions they will serve, are the following:

- Metropolitan Family Services — Auburn Gresham
- Project Exploration — Austin
- After School Matters, Inc. — Back of the Yards
- Rincon Family Services — Belmont Cragin
- SGA Youth & Family Services, NFP — Brighton Park
- Think Outside Da Block — Chicago Lawn
- SGA Youth & Family Services, NFP — Gage Park
- After School Matters, Inc. — Garfield Park (East Garfield & West Garfield Park)
- Think Outside Da Block — Greater Englewood Area (Englewood & West Englewood)



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

- Urban Male Network — Greater Grand Crossing
- Metropolitan Family Service — Greater Roseland Area (Roseland, Pullman & West Pullman)
- Young Men's Christian Association of Chicago — Humboldt Park
- The Alliance 98 — Little Village
- UCAN — North Lawndale
- Urban Male Network — South Shore

The Community Anchor Organization program will provide funding for community anchors to convene community-level stakeholders (i.e. youth-serving organizations, faith leaders, school staff, etc.) and caring adults committed to youth development to mobilize and connect young people ages 6 to 24 to engaging and meaningful out-of-school time programming in 15 target Community Strategy Regions across the south and west sides.

All awarded delegates will host monthly convenings of partners to strategize, collaborate, and share resources. These efforts will result in a community plan outlining how agencies in the region will collaborate to support a healthy community ecosystem for youth focused on ensuring that youth and young adults have meaningful out-of-school time opportunities. Awarded delegates will also host three community events each year responding to the needs and interests of their region. Each of the awarded agencies will receive equal funding of \$250,298 per year to carry out this work.

The community-based organizations that were funded for the Community Anchor Organizations program, and the Community Strategy Regions they will serve, are the following:

- Greater Auburn Gresham Development Corporation — Auburn Gresham
- Project Exploration — Austin
- Catholic Bishop of Chicago Holy Cross Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish — Back of the Yards
- Brighton Park Neighborhood Council — Brighton Park
- Inner-City Muslim Action — Chicago Lawn
- CircEsteem — Gage Park
- Think Outside Da Block — Greater Englewood Area (Englewood & West Englewood)
- Gary Comer Youth Center, Inc. — Greater Grand Crossing
- Phalanx Family Services — Greater Roseland Area (Roseland, Pullman & West Pullman)
- The Puerto Rican Cultural Center — Humboldt Park
- Beyond the Ball NFP — Little Village



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



- Lost Boyz Inc. — South Shore

An RFP is currently open in order to select awardees for three remaining Community Strategy Regions: Belmont Cragin, Garfield Park, and North Lawndale. The RFP closes on May 26, 2023. For more information and to apply, please visit [City of Chicago :: DFSS Re-Release MCMF Anchor Organization 2023 \(RFP\)](#).

To learn more about the My CHI. My Future. initiative and opportunities around for young people, visit [MyCHIMyFuture.org](#) and follow @MyCHIMyFuture on Instagram for updates. Kickback events will be viewable as they are planned on the My CHI. My Future. website and mobile app, which can be downloaded on iOS and Android devices.

#